

What should I do before I start a physical activity program?

Before you start a physical activity program, you should

- talk with your health care team
- plan ahead
- find an exercise buddy
- decide how you'll track your physical activity
- decide how you'll reward yourself

Talk with your health care team. Your health care team may include a doctor, nurse, dietitian, diabetes educator, and others. Always talk with your health care team before you start a new physical activity program. Your health care team will tell you a target range for your blood glucose levels.

People with diabetes who take insulin or certain diabetes medicines are more likely to have low blood glucose, also called **hypoglycemia**. If your blood glucose levels drop too low, you could pass out, have a **seizure**, or go into a coma. Physical activity can make hypoglycemia more likely or worse in people who take insulin or certain diabetes medicines, so planning ahead is key. It's important to stay active. Ask your health care team how to stay active safely. Read more in *Hypoglycemia* at www.diabetes.niddk.nih.gov.

Physical activity works together with healthy eating and diabetes medicines to prevent diabetes problems. Studies show that people with type 2 diabetes who lose weight with physical activity and make healthy changes to their eating plan are less likely to need diabetes and heart medicines. Ask your health care team about your healthy eating plan and all your medicines. Ask if you need to change the amount of medicine you take or the food you eat before any physical activity.

Read more in the following publications at www.diabetes.niddk.nih.gov:

- *What I need to know about Eating and Diabetes*
- *What I need to know about Diabetes Medicines*

Talk with your health care team about what types of physical activity are safe for you, such as walking, weightlifting, or housework. Certain activities may be unsafe for people who have low vision or have nerve damage to their feet.

Make copies of the table of questions and topics in the “My Physical Activity Planning Tools” section to take with you when you visit your health care team. Write down the answers on the table of questions and topics.

Plan ahead. Decide in advance what type of physical activity you'll do. Before you start, also choose

- the days and times you'll be physically active
- the length of each physical activity session
- your plan for warming up, stretching, and cooling down for each physical activity session
- a backup plan, such as where you'll walk if the weather is bad
- how you will measure your progress

To make sure you stay active, find activities you like to do. If you keep finding excuses not to be physically active, think about why:

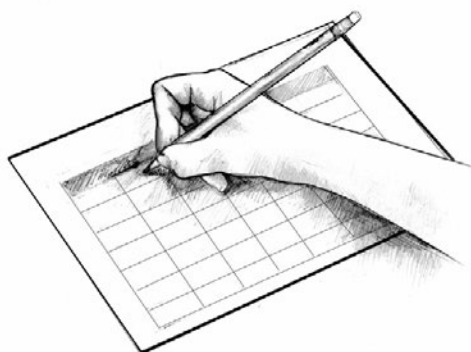
- Are your goals realistic?
- Do you need a change in activity?
- Would another time be more convenient?

Find an exercise buddy. Many people find they are more likely to be physically active if someone joins them. Ask a friend or family member to be your exercise buddy. When you do physical activities with a buddy you may find that you

- enjoy the company
- stick to the physical activity plan
- are more eager to do physical activities

Being active with your family may help everyone stay at a healthy weight. Keeping a healthy weight may prevent them from developing diabetes or **prediabetes**. Prediabetes is when the amount of glucose in your blood is above normal yet not high enough to be called diabetes.

Decide how you'll track your physical activity. Write down your blood glucose levels and when and how long you are physically active in a record book. You'll be able to track your progress and see how physical activity affects your blood glucose. You can find tools to help track your daily activities at www.ndep.nih.gov.



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Decide how you'll reward yourself. Reward yourself with a nonfood item or activity when you reach your goals. For example, treat yourself to a movie or buy a new plant for the garden.

What kinds of physical activity can help me?

Many kinds of physical activity can help you take care of your diabetes. Even small amounts of physical activity can help. You can measure your physical activity level by how much effort you use.

Doctors suggest that you aim for 30 to 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity most days of the week. Children and adolescents with type 2 diabetes who are 10 to 17 years old should aim for 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous activity every day.

Your health care team can tell you more about what kind of physical activity is best for you. They can also tell you when and how much you can increase your physical activity level.

Light physical activity. Light activity is easy. Your physical activity level is light if you

- are breathing normally
- are not sweating
- can talk normally or even sing